Planning Series

Michipicoten Island Provincial Park

Interim Management Statement

Ontario

Ministry of Natural Resources

Hon. Vincent G. Kerrio
Minister

Mary Mogford
Deputy Minister

July 28, 1986

REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S APPROVAL STATEMENT

This Interim Management Statement will provide interim direction for the management of Michipicoten Island Provincial Park until a comprehensive Park Management Plan is prepared.

This statement will provide the basis for the subsequent preparation of the Park Management Plan.

I am pleased to approve this Interim Management Statement for Michipicoten Island Provincial Park.

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Regional Director
Northeastern Region

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Additional information about the park and copies of this publication are available from the District Manager, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 1160, 22 Mission Road, Wawa, Ontario, P0S 1K0, telephone: (705) 856-2396.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I	LAND TENURE	1
II	EXISTING AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT	2
III	RECREATION ACTIVITIES	2
IV	COMMERCIAL TOURISM	2
V	COMMERCIAL RESOURCE USES	3
VI	NATURAL RESOURCES	3
VII	CULTURAL RESOURCES	4
VIII	VISITOR SERVICES	5
IX	RESEARCH	5
X	MARKETING	6
SELECTED REFERENCES		8

MICHIPICOTEN ISLAND PROVINCIAL PARK
INTERIM MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

I LAND TENURE

The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources received approval to designate Michipicoten Island and offshore shoals and islands within 2.5 km of the shoreline as a provincial park on the 11th day of December, 1984. The park includes 36,740 ha of land and water (Figure 1).

The following properties are excluded from the park:

- seven (7) cottage lots, one (1) commercial fishing camp, and Department of Transport properties in Quebec Harbour;
- four (4) lighthouse reservations with Transport Canada;
- one (1) mining lease;
- three (3) separate groups of mining claims; and,
- one (1) land use permit for a commercial outpost camp.

A portion of the park lands have been designated under an exploratory licence of occupation for mineral exploration.

Guidelines:

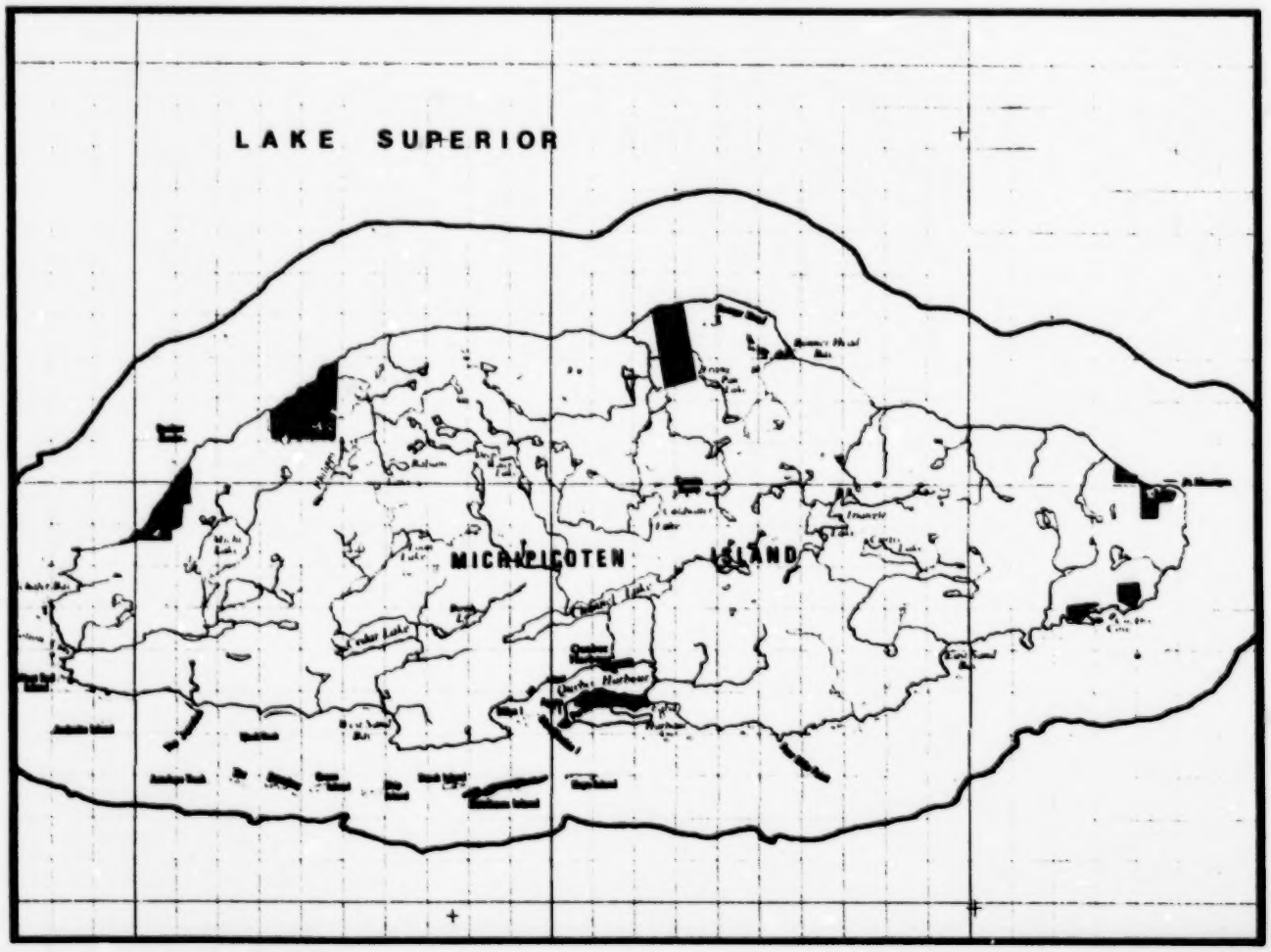
Crown lands will continue for park purposes.

Private lands will continue (eg. cottages in Quebec Harbour).

Transport Canada will continue to maintain properties on Michipicoten Island and Davieaux Island as part of their overall Great Lakes navigation objectives. The Ministry of Natural Resources will continue to lease the Front Range Lighthouse building from Transport Canada for park purposes.

Existing mining claims and the mining lease will continue as per the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines' terms and conditions. If these properties revert to the Crown, they will become part of the park. The existing exploratory licence of occupation may continue for a five year period commencing in 1984. The company, under the terms of this licence, may request annual extensions, which if granted will allow the company to hold the licence for a maximum of 11 years. Other applications for exploratory licences of occupation may be made to the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

MICHIPICOTEN ISLAND
PROVINCIAL PARK



II EXISTING/PROPOSED PARK DEVELOPMENT

At present, park development is limited.

The Front Range Lighthouse building is leased from Transport Canada to serve as a park headquarters. The most convenient access to Michipicoten Island is by floatplane. Quebec Harbour is a natural refuge for boats and is on the Great Lakes' yachting charts. There are no public park facilities, designated trails, or canoe routes in the park.

Guidelines:

The building lease with the Department of Transport will continue as per the terms of the lease as long as a headquarters is required in that area. The aircraft and boat docking facility has deteriorated at the Quebec Harbour, Front Range Lighthouse location and should be upgraded.

Park management planning will evaluate the location needs and role of park operations in the park and determine future needs for facilities.

III RECREATION ACTIVITIES

Recreation activities, prior to regulation of Michipicoten Island as a provincial park, included overnight and day use activities (eg. sportfishing, canoeing, boating, hiking, camping, beachcombing, wildlife viewing, sport hunting). Use was low.

Guidelines:

Park regulation prohibits hunting. Other recreation uses will continue as long as they do not impair park values. All potential outdoor recreation uses will be evaluated as part of the park management planning process. No recreation facilities will be developed at this time.

IV COMMERCIAL TOURISM

Commercial tourism occurs on a small scale on the island. There is one fly-in outpost camp operated under a land use permit on Michi Lake.

Guidelines:

The District Land Use Guidelines recommended that the existing commercial tourism activity be allowed to continue. Potential to expand tourism on the island will be evaluated as part of the park management planning process.

V COMMERCIAL RESOURCE USES

The island has been designated as a provincial park to represent its unique island ecosystem. Natural resource values include mineral resources, fur trapping, and offshore fisheries. No timber values have been identified for the island.

Guidelines:

The Wawa District Land Use Guidelines and Backgrounder provide the direction for land use and resource development.

There will be no commercial forest activity on the island.

An exploratory licence of occupation (ELO) was established in 1984 for a period of five (5) years. The company will use 4690 ha of land under the terms of the ELO and may request annual extensions which if granted will allow the company to hold the licence for a maximum of 11 years. Other applications for exploratory licences of occupation may be made to the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

Existing mining claims and mining leases will continue as per the terms of the claims and leases.

Commercial trapping will continue. A fur management strategy will be prepared for this island trapping area.

Existing commercial fishing activity outside Quebec Harbour and within offshore limits of the park will continue as per the terms of the licence.

VI NATURAL RESOURCES

The natural resources of the park are influenced by its location in Lake Superior, the island's overall size, and a history of low use. There is very limited information on the natural resources of the island due to a lack of study.

The ancient lava bedrocks found here include a formation that does not occur on mainland Lake Superior shorelines or elsewhere in the province. Good examples of lava cooling structures and hexagonal erosional surfaces can be seen at various locations. The island shoreline and ancestral strand lines are dotted with a few representative sea caves, flowerpots, and postglacial beaches. The rugged island interior depicts a ridge and valley relief where the scoured bedrock is pocked with several small lakes. Numerous small streams drain these lakes. Some break through the bedrock ridges creating small scenic cataracts at various locations.

There are a variety of plant species found in the park that are representative of Boreal and Great Lakes-St.Lawrence forest types. Not as plentiful and similar to other areas of Lake Superior, there are arctic-alpine plants inhabiting disturbed areas of the shorelines and cliffs (Soper and Given, 1983).

A variety of fauna use the habitats of Michipicoten Island and its offshore rocks and shoals. Beaver are everywhere. The largest known predator is the red fox. Coyote, wolves, and bears are conspicuously absent, no doubt because of the lack of a large mammal prey species. Historic records indicate that woodland caribou, which once inhabited the island, were extirpated by overhunting in the 1800's. In 1981, an adult male was observed on the island. It is not known how it migrated there from the mainland. This occurrence, combined with the knowledge of its historic presence, led to a program to reintroduce woodland caribou (adult males and females, yearling males and females) to Michipicoten Island in 1982. These animals were obtained from the Slate Islands in the hope of reestablishing a Michipicoten herd.

Guidelines:

The natural resources of the park require additional research to determine the diversity of landforms, plants, and animals. There are some ideal opportunities to study island ecology here. Areas need to be set aside to observe plant and animal species where commercial activities are not active to determine the 'natural' developments and interactions of plants and animals.

VII CULTURAL RESOURCES

There has been no cultural resource survey of the park.

Precontact native peoples no doubt used the island. Folk legends portray native peoples as fearful of this mysterious place. Apparently, it was seldom visited. Historic accounts of use include mining, commercial fishing, and transportation. The historic name for the largest harbour, Refuge Harbour, now Quebec Harbour, reinforces that the island has one of the better natural harbours in this area of Lake Superior. Lighthouses have been maintained here dating back to the 1800's. There are two known 'ship wrecks' on the west end with some lesser tugs grounded in Quebec Harbour. Some of these were originally associated with commercial fishing camps.

Guidelines:

A cultural resource survey is required. This could be done on a thematic basis over a number of years in cooperation with the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture.

Cultural features are a nonrenewable resource and should be carefully documented in order that archaeological and historic uses are understood and that representative features are protected.

VII VISITOR SERVICES

General information, resource interpretation, and recreation potential for the island are not adequately described in park literature at present. There are a variety of sources of information in written form and known by the people who have used the area over the years.

Guidelines:

A park fact sheet and composite topographic map will be available upon request and a library of related literature will be maintained in the District Office in Wawa. The Ministry of Natural Resources will approach various authorities to have the provincial park status identified in appropriate sources (eg. Ontario Basic Mapping, National Topographic Maps, Great Lakes Navigation Charts).

VIII RESEARCH

A limited amount of research has occurred on the island. Reconnaissance, earth, and life science surveys documented the major features of the island in 1982. The designation of

the provincial park has generated some interest outside the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources in other agencies and universities to undertake research here. Measures have been taken to provide incentives for research.

Guidelines:

Approved research will be compatible with provincial parks objectives for protection, heritage appreciation, recreation, and tourism.

An overall research strategy is required for the park. Scientific research by qualified individuals, which contributes to the knowledge of natural resources and cultural history and to environmental and recreational management of the park, is encouraged through research policy and guidelines.

Research proposals will require the approval of the Ministry of Natural Resources and must also meet requirements of related provincial and federal legislation. The Ministry may appprove the temporary or permanent removal of geological samples, flora, and fauna specimens, and archaeological and historical artifacts by qualified researchers as part of approved research projects. All materials that are removed for research purposes will be described and the UTM Location will be filed with the District Manager in Wawa. Where documents are produced as part of approved research, a complementary copy will be provided to the District Manager in Wawa.

IX MARKETING

There have been very few requests for information about recreational uses of the park. Once the area is shown as a provincial park on maps, the literature requests for information will increase. A fact sheet has been prepared for release to the public to provide basic information about the park.

Guidelines:

Basic information about Michipicoten Island Provincial Park will be provided to persons requesting information. It will be of a custodial nature, reactive rather than proactive, providing accurate descriptions of the park upon request.

There is no need or desire to actively promote the area given that there are no facilities or services for the general public in the park.

A form letter and fact sheet will outline types of access, resource characteristics, and basic information that may be useful in trip planning. The difficulties and isolation of lake travel, interior use, and self-sufficiency required of visitors will be stressed.

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